

March 7, 2021

House Education Policy Committee:

I am writing to oppose HF874 which proposes new constitutional language stating:

“All children have a fundamental right to a quality public education that fully prepares them with the skills necessary for participation in the economy, our democracy, and society, as measured against uniform achievement standards set forth by the state. It is a paramount duty of the state to ensure quality public schools that fulfill this fundamental right.”

The intentions of this amendment are very unclear based on the language used. If the intention of the amendment is to improve public education, the local school districts, legislature, and the Department of Education have the ability to improve public education without amending the state constitution. The terms “quality” and “fully prepares” are also undefined and it is unclear who will define the terms. If the intention of the amendment is to improve public education, how will the amendment help in this regard? While I agree that the state should have a strong public school system, this amendment does not provide anything to improve the current system.

The measurement of education based on “uniform achievement standards” cannot capture the full education of a child. The success of a child’s education includes many characteristics that cannot be measured on a test such as the quality of their character and their work ethic.

No where in the United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or the Minnesota Constitution is public education considered a “fundamental right”. Using the term here would imply that a student who receives a different education, such as a private school education, is being denied this “fundamental right.” All children in Minnesota have the ability to attend a public school if their parents choose to send them to public school, but it is the duty of parents to decide if they would prefer to send their child(ren) to public school or choose another option to educate their child(ren).

The use of the phrase “our democracy” in this amendment is incorrect as we have a republican form of government both at the state and federal level.

I encourage you to reject this proposed amendment to the Minnesota Constitution.

Sincerely,

Emily Dallager
Hugo, Minnesota